

BOOK REVIEW

On ideas that changed man's outlook

PARINAMAM—PRAKRIYAYUM,

UTHPANNAVUM: by Edward O. Dodson Translated by Balakrishnan Cheroopa. Price: Rs. 16.00

SASTHRATHINTE DARSANAM:

by Philip Franks. Translated by P. A. Mohammed. Price: Rs. 12.00

Both published by the State Institute of Languages, Trivandrum

DURING the greater part of his life, Darwin devoted himself to his own particular field of research, more thoroughly than most other scientists.

He never went in for teaching nor took up any other public appointment. Hence his activities became more and more confined to biological speculations and experiments. This may explain why he embraced with such intensity, but also with such limitation, the theories he set up.

Darwin began work to prepare a volume on the transmutation of species in September, 1858 and published the same in November, 1859, under the title of the *Origin of Species*. He himself has claimed it to be the chief work of his life.

His success as a man of science, as stated in his autobiography, has been determined by complex and diversified mental qualities and conditions. Of these, the most important have been the love of science, unbounded patience in long reflecting over any subject, industry in observing and collecting facts and a fair share of invention, as well as of common sense.

The natural explanations of preceding ages were generally based on the wisdom of the creator and the benefit of man as the cause of all that exists and takes place, an explanation without the slightest trace of scientific treatment. Even on his first appearance Darwin was either extolled as one of the greatest geniuses in the world or abused as an ignorant or unreliable dilettante, according to different points of view. If we measure him by his influence on the general cultural development of humanity, then no scientist has so deeply influenced man's general conception of life as Darwin has done.

Mendel opened a new way into the unknown realm of science with his little essay, containing his discoveries, which later appeared in the proceedings of the Bruenn Society in 1866. The greatness of the work was rediscovered by a peculiar, but by no means an accidental, coincidence by three investigators, in three different places in Europe, DeVries in Amsterdam, Correns in Germany, Tschermak in Vienna. As Mendel's fellow countryman and biographer Hugo Iltis says, the little essay has given stimulus to all branches of biology. The progress of research since the beginning of the 20th century has built for him "a monument more durable and more imposing than any monument of marble because not only has 'Mendelism' become the name of a whole vast province of investigation, but all living creatures which follow Mendelian laws in the hereditary transmission of their characters are said to Mendelise".

The theory of genetics and the theory of evolution are, in short, the two main theories which can be considered, in the words of Waddington "worthy of the title 'fundamental biology'". The text book, *Evolution: Process and Product* by Edward O. Dodson, published in 1960, is an elucidation of this "Fundamental biology".

In their origins science and philosophy were indistinguishable and till a hundred and fifty years ago the humanities had a commanding influence in the academic world. Science, as we know it, was hardly taught even in universities. In ancient Greece, philosophy and science were synonymous and the attainment of true science being regarded as the highest objective of philosophy. The separation of science from philosophy has been a long process which is by no means complete. Science, having once cut itself loose from philosophy, was not to be distracted again by metaphysical controversy, not until the 20th century crises of relativity and quantum theory. There has always been isolation between specialities and serious effort is required to find a common hu-

man factor underlying the arts and the sciences through which specialists might communicate.

Philosophy of science is the product of the growing awareness of philosophers of the importance of science in intellectual as well as in practical life and of scientists who have seen the increasing necessity of clear thinking about the propositions of their theories. Any philosophy of science which claims generality must apply equally to the physical, biological and social sciences. As the great historian of science George Sarton has stated — "Humanities are inseparable from human creations, whether these be philosophic, scientific, technical or artistic and literary. It would be foolish to claim that a good poem or a beautiful statue is more humanistic or more inspiring than a scientific discovery; it all depends on the relation between them and you".

Philip Frank's *Philosophy of Science* is a useful text book for the serious student of this topic, which has great relevance today.

The State Institute of languages has done a great service in arranging the translations of these text books. They are published by them under the scheme for production of university level books in regional languages, sponsored by the Government of India.

There are few university level text books in Malayalam in various subjects, as hardly any attempts were made so far to prepare them. This is especially true of science textbooks. Any attempt at preparing them, in original or in translation, is praise worthy. It was indeed a delightful experience to read language versions of these two books as they reveal the strength as well as weakness inherent in the situation. The translators, Shri Balakrishnan Cheroopa and Shri P. A. Mohammed, have made a heroic attempt to do their job well.

—KONNIYOOR
NARENDRANATH

Will Argentina bomb with Inc

From T. V. PARASURAM

Express News Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 27

Argentina now has the most advanced nuclear programme in Latin America, a Washington Post despatch from Argentina said yesterday.

Argentina has been doing nuclear research for the last 24 years. Five and a half months ago it began to operate a nuclear power plant built at Atucha. The plant was designed and built by Siemens, a West German company, and uses natural uranium.

Another nuclear power plant is to be built by Canada. This, too, will be fuelled by natural uranium. In avoiding enriched uranium plants produced by the United States Argentina was taking a conscious political decision to stay independent in nuclear matters.

It has also made it clear that the question of international inspection will have to be negotiated for each plant separately as it is built.

Argentina is not a signatory to the discriminatory nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty. Like Brazil, India and other countries, Argentina insists that the same rules must apply to the nuclear haves and have-nots.

Argentina has known uranium reserves of 15,000 metric tonnes. Other areas believed to possess

Plea to oil nations and have-nots

BAGDAD, Dec. 27 (AFP)

The vice-chairman of the Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council, Mr. Saddam Hussein, yesterday urged developing nations and oil-producing countries to co-ordinate their efforts with a view to a re-examination of the world monetary system and "the gold issue".

He said the two groups of countries ought to hold consultations within the framework of existing international bodies, such as the interim committee in charge of monetary reform.

"Any country or group of countries which in any way contributes to an increase in world inflation must entirely assume its responsibilities," he added.

Any major increase in liquidity inside industrial countries would have "serious consequences" and could harm the developing nations, he warned.

Science writing in Malayalam

SASTRA SAHITYAM MALAYALATHIL: by C. P. Sridharan, Pub. Sree Narayana Vilasom Book Depot, Thiruvananthapuram. Price—Rs. 9.00.

AS an eminent Science writer has put it, Science is the everlasting interrogation of nature by man. This began when ancestral man overcame his superstitious wondering and began to ask — "why?". Man will continue to raise "whys" till his curiosity is extinguished. But when this happens, one feels that man will have lost most of the other things that make him human.

Today Science has advanced so much that it occupies a pre-eminent position in the life of man. We should remember that it attracted little attention, even in Universities, until the beginning of the present century. Since then, to quote Charles Singer, the immense and accelerating increase in scientific activity and the resulting mass of real and applicable knowledge has changed every side of life. Having come to control and direct industry, it is now rapidly and manifestly transforming the very face of the earth and the lot of its living inhabitants, whether, human, animal or plant. It has permeated all aspects of human endeavour that one can not really feel at home in the present world, if he has no intelligent grasp of what Science is up to.

But the obstacles faced by the lay-man for gaining this enlightenment are really formidable. In the words of Lord Ritchie Calder, with the rapid accumulation of knowledge, with its aggregation of new discoveries and with its impetuous conversion of desk-and-laboratory findings into practical innovations, the fantastic acceleration of scientific progress has arisen. The result has been that the volume of knowledge (Six million published scientific communications, increasing at the rate of half a million a year)—has become a Niagara of information; that the number of Scientists is doubling every ten years; and that Science is becoming more and more fragmented into specialisations, barely able to communicate with each other, because of the unique language each has invented for its convenience. No wonder, then, that the ordinary intelligent lay-man finds himself overawed and feels that scientists have become a priesthood, creating and conserving their own mysteries.

Specialisation was inevitable in the circumstances and with each generation of scientists, it has grown more and more intense. The publications of specialists regarding their individual work became so voluminous that even fellow specialists found it difficult, if not impossible, to know them. The position can be well illustrated with "Chemical Abstracts"—an important journal in the field of biochemistry, which publishes abstracts of research findings twice a month. Its individual issue has up to four hundred pages, in double column and microscopic print. Each column is numbered separately beginning with the first issue of a year and ending with the last. It covered 475 journals in 1907 when it was founded. The same journal in 1960, covered 9800 journals, abstracted 105,000 articles from 97 countries in 52 languages! This is just a small drop in the ever rising sea of scientific knowledge as biochemistry is only one of the many branches of Science!

"It is important"—wrote Albert Einstein "that the general public have opportunity to obtain correct and intelligible information on the objectives and results of scientific research. It is not sufficient that individual results are recognised, followed up and applied by a few specialists, in their respective fields. Limiting scientific knowledge to a small group weakens the philosophic spirit of the people and leads to its spiritual impoverishment".

We will not be showing any disrespect to Scientists when we say that most of them lack communication skills at the desired level. They find it difficult to discuss matters relating to their own disciplines without resort to technical jargon. And jargon is rarely understood and never appreciated by the lay public. In the circumstances, what we require are more and more of the rare species of men who combine extraordinary writing ability with wide knowledge and understanding of science. Such a person should be a perfect and most inclusive interface between hard science and the layman. It is their duty to bring the obscure into the light. Initiation into the magnificent

world of science, as stated by Issac Assimou, brings great aesthetic satisfaction, inspiration to youth, fulfilment of the desire to know and a deeper appreciation of the wonderful potentialities and achievements of the human mind. It is about the contributions of such persons that Mr. C.P. Sridharan has mainly written in his book "Sastra Sahityam Malayalathil."

Kerala's contribution to various fields of scientific knowledge, from early days is by any standard substantial. Unfortunately there is no authoritative assessment of these topics so far. A comprehensive history of such ideas is an essential need for a proper understanding of our rich heritage. A scholarly and illuminating study by Mr. K.V. Sarma, entitled "A history of Kerala school of Hindu astronomy"—may be mentioned here as a relevant effort in this line. He gives the characteristics of Hindu astronomy as it developed in Kerala, its major achievements, highlights and main trends. Some of the significant findings of modern mathematics, found anticipated in the astronomical works produced in mediaeval times in Kerala, are also mentioned in this valuable book.

Many of us may not know that the first printed book containing Malayalam script was an illustrated botanical dictionary of indigenous plants entitled "Horti Malabaricci Pars Duo-decima and Ultima De Herbis Et Diversis Illurum Stecie Buf" (Keralaramam) in twelve volumes. The names of plants were given in Latin, Arabic, Sanskrit and Malayalam. It was printed in 1686 at Amsterdam, about a hundred years before a book in Malayalam was printed at a press in Kerala! The first book in Malayalam dealing with "natural history" was "Mriga Charitam" by Rev. J.G. Beuttler published in 1861. The great lexicographer Dr. Hermann Gundert began publishing topics on modern Science even earlier in his magazine "Paschimodayam" which he started in 1847. This was, in fact, the first attempt made in Malayalam to introduce to our people the brave new world of modern science. Hence it is in the fitness of things to regard this savant as the father of modern science writing in Malayalam. With his initiative and guidance some books were also produced relating to Chemistry and Physics.

The above details are indicated to show that the desire to use our mother tongue for dissemination of modern scientific ideas, is evident from early days. In the history of the growth of this effort, we can see the names of innumerable gifted men. It is not within the scope of this review to indicate their detailed list. Mr. Sridharan has done a marvellous job in presenting an assessment of their contributions in the correct perspective.

If we make an objective assessment of the present state of Malayalam language as a carrier of vital information relating to modern scientific knowledge (technically devoted as "functional literature"), the situation revealed is far from satisfactory, if not alarming. According to Vol. II of Retrospective Bibliography of Malayalam books published till the end of 1970, such titles constituted only 30 per cent of the total publications. This is far from satisfactory, if we compare the situation with other modern languages, such as English or Russian. In English, for example, functional literature, on an average constitutes more than two third of the total books published per year.

Malayalam is yet to attain the status of a language fit to be a medium for dissemination of modern scientific knowledge. Perhaps our people, including the writers, have not yet accepted their mother tongue for such a valuable purpose. They still depend on other languages, mainly English, for such enlightenment.

Sastra Sahityam Malayalathil will help us a great deal to make a proper stock-taking of the present situation. This may perhaps enable us to revitalise our efforts to enrich our language for making it a better instrument of modern knowledge. Mr. Sridharan has a special ability for sifting and selecting relevant facts and presenting them with force and clarity. He has a vigorous and lively style, best suited for such an evaluation. His critical estimate of men and matters is objective and so there can hardly be any ground for disagreement. This is the first book of its nature on science writing in Malayalam and it will serve as a useful and valuable book of reference for a long time to come.

—KONNIYLOOR NARENDRANATH

Indian Express - 1975 May 17

Good translation of a Moravia novel

ROMAKKARI by Alberto Moravia, Translated by C. Govinda Kurup. Publishers S.P.C.S. Ltd., Kottayam, Price Rs. 15.25.

IT is well known that novel as a literary form in Malayalam, had its origin in the intense desire of our early writers to produce works on the pattern of English models. Hence even from the start, the influence of foreign authors on our readers were very evident. Our writers not only showed a keen liking to copy, they also evinced great interest to translate, some of the masterpieces of fiction into our language. This trend received an impetus with the efforts of A. Balakrishna Pillai to introduce modern trends in our literature. The works of Maupassant, Zola, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and others became favourites with our authors and general public. They inspired the more ambitious ones to produce works on modern principles of literary creation.

In this tradition, Shri C. Govinda Kurup has done some worth-while work. He has trans-

lated Alberto Moravia's *Agostino* and *L'amore Coniugale* and published them in 1965 and 1969 respectively. But this reviewer had, unfortunately, no occasion to go through them. *Romakkari* is the product of Kurup's continued interest in this line, and is the translation of *La Romana* (The woman of Rome). His is indeed a praiseworthy attempt to familiarise our people with the works of that eminent Italian author, who has probed the depths of a generation and its period in history.

Alberto Moravia (pseudonym of Alberto Pincherle) was born in Rome in 1907. In his enforced leisure time due to the ill health during his youth, Moravia read widely and became a master of several languages. He worked for a time as a journalist and was a foreign correspondent in London. Though a disillusioned and cynical man in outlook, he was able to gain immediate recognition with his very first novel *Gli Indifferenti* (The Indifferent Ones), when the book was published in 1929. He also became one of the most discussed among the writers of the new generation in Italy. The quality that is prominent in this novel is a grim, hopeless realism. This on the whole, became a basic characteristic of his artistic expression in later years. The characters in 'The Indifferent Ones' could, as indicated by a critic, "be divided into two types: one, unconscious and superficial, lets life overcome him, accepts weakness and compromise, seeming not to know any better, the other looks at his destiny with critical pessimistic eyes, lacks faith in himself and in others, indulges in psychological self examination and confessions but does not find in himself energy to escape toward broader and lighter way of life."

His next work was a book of short stories *La Bella Vita* (1935) which was followed by the novel *Le Ambizioni Sbagliate* (1935) (wheel of Fortune). In 1937 appeared another book of short novels *L'Imbroglione* which showed a richer development of his abilities as a master of fiction.

Moravia began to take interest in politics and the Fascists who were in power in Italy, banned his books. 'The Wheel of Fortune' is a serious novel and is more deeper than his 'Indifferent Ones.' It is clear that he was inspired by the Russian writers, especially Dostoevsky "in the analysis of the slow and inevitable progress of a protagonist towards crime and self destruction, as well as painting a constantly somber and haggard atmosphere." The influence of French realism and works of Pirandello, Tozzi, Svevo are also very marked.

While Moravia was in hiding to save himself from the wrath of the rulers, *La mascherata* (The Fancy Dress Party) was published in 1941. His other books appeared in quick succession: *Agostino* in 1944, *La Romana* in 1947 (The Woman of Rome), *Disubbidienza* in 1948 (Disobedience), *L'amore Coniugale* in 1949 (Conjugal Love), *Il Conformista* in 1951 (The conformist), *Il disprezzo* in 1954 (A Ghost at Noon) and *Racconti romani* in 1954 (Roman Stories). He came out in the open in 1944 after the occupation of Italy by the Allied forces.

Moravia's most popular book *La Romana* (The Woman of Rome) is an uncompromising realistic work about a prostitute, and is considered as an extreme example of one school of contemporary Italian writing. It is the story of Adriana, who began life as an artist's model, even at sixteen. But she was forced to give up this profession, as the artist who took her into employment failed to establish a good business. Adriana's mother tried without success to get her fixed up as a dancer in a ballet troupe. Adriana was fascinated by a soft spoken and gentle young man, Gino, who promised to marry her. But she subsequently discovered that Gino was a married man and that he will never be able to take her as his wife. Her affairs with Astarita the police official, Sonzogno — a hoodlum, Mino — a 19-year-old student who was an anti-fascist, are described in detail in the pages of this book. Some incidents, pictured in depth, may be repelling to some readers, as they are close to pornography. But, on the whole, the theme is made compelling by the power of Moravia's narration.

La Romana was rendered into English by Lydia Holland and was first published in 1947. Moravia's style according to some critics is undistinguished, but his dialogue is forceful and impressive. But he gives wearisome and useless repetition of scenes, dialogues and monologues. Accordingly there are critics who feel that "the most beautiful pages of Moravia may be found in some of his short stories, where the limited narrow world is usually painted with crudeness."

Shri Govinda Kurup has taken great pains to render Moravia faithfully into Malayalam. He has succeeded substantially to make his language simple, attractive and impressive. I am sure that *Romakkari* will be favourably accepted by discerning critics and welcomed by all lovers of fiction in Malayalam.

— KONNIYOOR NARENDRANATH

iberated

and the Kathakali ragas. These could be salvaged and adapted through the radio and the cinema and hybridising experiments, taking care not to degenerate into vulgarity. There can be a new experience as in the Bengali tunes in "Chemmeen". The folk music can no longer be neglected as countrified crudities for they express popular feelings and emotions and have poetic and historical value. Nothing goes straight to the heart or stirs emotions as these unsophisticated tunes and texts composed by simple rustics and sung by unlettered lips. These strains of artless people must be researched and revived.

Another vital area of neglect of our musical culture was in not exploiting the musically renderable poetic compositions. Even Sri Sankara's stanzas are great music so are Sri Narayana Guru's poetry. If Thunchan, Kunchan, Vallathol, Asan, Ulloor, Changampuzha and Sankara Kurup are set to music by competent choreographers, a new tidal wave of songs can rise and its uniqueness will be that the thematic content will be man and society and not merely God in many forms.

Kerala's great music composers had enriched *Kalabharathi* in a big way. It is essential that their works are brought out and popularised, researched and revived and set to music in Carnatak style or otherwise. The musical community of Kerala had to be roused through carnivals such as take place in Madras city, preferably during the Onam season.

The challenge of our times, Mr. Krishna Iyer, said was the harnessing of music power to social and revolutionary movements, even spiritual revival. The upsurge of the working class as a social phenomenon and force depended not only on strikes, but also the unified, militant movements which universal chants of serious musical compositions and ideological content can produce.

Mr. Krishna Iyer, who was once a Minister in Kerala, had a dig at the State Government too. The cultured Government of Kerala, he said, by some unfortunate quirk of the Education Department, stopped music and painting in schools. Are fine arts the manifestation of the noble being inside or an excrescence for which money should not be spent, he asked and added that an unmusical government sinned against the soul of man.

The great potentialities of music also brings out the need for upgrading the status and the means of singers. It is heartening that many music clubs are blossoming all over the State. The riotous enthusiasm for this noble art must be regulated, disciplined and trained, so that it may not be diverted into unsocial and injurious pastures. The State, he said, must be activist in sublimating the lofty energy showing up in abundance.

— P. ARAVINDAKSHAN.

Golden jubilee of Bala Bhavan

A Christian institution which has been the asylum and the hope for thousands of orphans is celebrating its golden Jubilee: the St. Antony's Bala Bhavan, about ten kilometres from Chalakudy on the Ashtamichira—Annamanada Road.

Inspired and organised by the late Rev. Fr. Antony Pullocaran, the Bala Bhavan has not only nurtured and nursed hundreds of orphans and destitutes upto the age of eighteen, but has played an important role in the educational, spiritual and economic development of the surrounding areas.

The institution directed by Fr. Ephrem Puduchery and run by Rev. Fr. Francis Chiramel of Malabar Missionary Union, was nearly self-sufficient until some time ago when land reforms deprived it of its valuable rice production.